

Message Text

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47

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SUBJECT: EMPLOYEES OF UN OFFICE GENEVA STRIKE, 25 FEBRUARY 1976

1. G-LEVEL EMPLOYEES OF THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE IN GENEVA (UNOG) WENT ON STRIKE THE MORNING OF FEBRUARY 25, 1976 AND STATED WOULD REMAIN ON STRIKE UNTIL DEMANDS MET. AT ISSUE IS UNOG'S RELUCTANCE TO ACCEPT THE RESULTS OF A LOCAL WAGE SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE BATTLE INSTITUTE IN LATE 1975 WHICH INDICATED THAT A 17.4 PERCENT INCREASE WAS JUSTIFIED FOR THE G-2, STEP 6 LEVEL, A 24.5 PERCENT INCREASE AT THE G-5, STEP 6 LEVEL. ACCORDING TO AN AGREEMENT ENTERED INTO IN 1968, THE RESULTS OF THE BATTELLE SURVEY ARE BINDING ON THE ADMINISTRATION, BUT FOR OBVIOUS BUDGETARY REASONS UNOG ADMINISTRATORS ARE OF COURSE UNABLE TO COMPLY.

2. ALTHOUGH REQUIRED TO HAVE CONDUCTED THE SURVEY IN 1973, UNOG ADMINISTRATORS PROCRASTINATED IN THE FACE OF RISING INFLATION AND THE DEVALUATION OF THE DOLLAR, FEARFUL OF THE RESULTS AND HOPEFUL THAT SOMEHOW LOCAL SALARIES WOULD SOMEHOW DECLINE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THIS OBVIOUSLY HAS NOT BEEN THE CASE AND UNOG ADMINISTRATORS ARE CLEARLY IN A BIND.

3. STAFF ASSOCIATION AND STAFF COUNCIL SOURCES CLAIM THAT
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AT LEAST HALF OF THE PALAIS DES NATIONS' 2300 WORKERS ARE IN

SYMPATHY WITH THE STRIKE, BUT WITH ELECTRICITY, HOT WATER, AND OTHER ESSENTIAL SERVICES CUT OFF, IT IS DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE THE DEGREE OF SOLIDARITY. IN ANY CASE, WORK IN THE PALAIS DES NATIONS HAS COME TO A STANDSTILL AND SEVERAL MAJOR CONFERENCES HAVE ADJOURNED; AMONG THEM THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS, THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS, AND THE CONFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT. (THE GATT GROUP OF EIGHTEEN MET IN THE EFTA BUILDING AND WAS NOT AFFECTED BY THE STRIKE.) UNOG ADMINISTRATORS ARE REPORTEDLY IN THE PROCESS OF ATTEMPTING TO MOVE MAJOR MEETINGS INTO THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR OFFICE (ILO) BUILDING, BUT THE UNOG STAFF ASSOCIATION IS ALREADY IN TOUCH WITH THEIR ILO COUNTERPARTS IN A COUNTER-MOVE TO ENLIST THEIR SYMPATHY AND HAVE THEM STRIKE ALSO.

4. ON BEHALF OF UNOG DIRECTOR GENERAL WINSPEARE, AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT WAS ISSUED THE MORNING OF FEBRUARY 25, 1976 WHICH INDICATED THAT THE UNOG ADMINISTRATION WAS WILLING TO MEET AS SOON AS POSSIBLE WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STAFF TO "EXAMINE THE REPORT OF THE BATTELLE INSTITUTE AND TO DETERMINE THE INCREASES AND ADJUSTMENTS TO BE APPLIED TO THE SALARIES OF THE GENERAL SERVICE STAFF." THIS STATEMENT WAS "TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE" FOR STAFF ASSOCIATION AND STAFF UNION MEMBERS WHO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THEY HAVE BEEN OPERATING IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF MUTUAL MISTRUST WITH UNOG ADMINISTRATION SINCE THE LATTER FAILED TO CONDUCT THE WAGE SURVEY IN 1973.

5. THE PALAIS WAS ALMOST COMPLETELY VACATED AS OF 1600 HOURS, ALTHOUGH THE STRIKERS URGED THEIR COLLEAGUES INVOLVED IN HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS (UNDRO, UNICEF, UNHCR) TO STAY ON THE JOB. THE STAFF ASSOCIATION AND STAFF UNION ARE HOLDING A GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT 1000 HOURS, FEBRUARY 26, 1976. FURTHER REPORTING FOLLOWS, TOGETHER WITH RECOMMENDATIONS RE WHETHER OR NOT SEND DELEGATIONS FROM WASHINGTON.

6. SUBSEQUENT TO ABOVE, HIGH ITU OFFICIAL REPORTS THAT AFTER STORMY SESSION FEB 24 ITU EMPLOYEES DECIDED NOT TO JOIN IN UN STRIKE AND ALL ITU OPERATIONS PROCEEDING NORMALLY. BRUNGART

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